

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Winner School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Maintenance	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Surveys
- ? Private school information
- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? District annual needs assessment
- ? TAT: referral vs. non-referral information
- ? Personnel training

Promising Practice

The district employs all certified staff and requires its paraprofessionals to attend three days of training. The district is also a Dakota Digital Network site for extra training opportunities for staff, parents, family members, and community.

Maintenance

The district has policies and procedures in place to support its child find procedures. Our district collaborates with our local Headstart, Birth-3 program, social and medical services, and private schools for child find procedures.

The district uses the TAT, or teacher assistance team, process at every level. The TAT team, with the involvement of the parents, makes all appropriate decisions.

Our district has policies and procedures in place when dealing with improving results through performance goals and indicators as well as when working with children voluntarily enrolled in private schools.

Needs Improvement

Information received from our parent surveys indicate that parents would like a chance to be more involved in advisory groups and other parents groups to help with decisions about special education in our district.

The parent survey results also showed evidence of concern that teachers are not setting high goals and having high expectations for children with disabilities in the district.

Staff survey data indicates that teachers would like more input in identifying staff development needs and training opportunities for students with special needs. Staff would like to see more time made available during the school week to complete necessary tasks (i.e. instructing students, conducting evaluations, meeting with parents, and consulting with colleagues).

Validation Results

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee. In addition the training component noted by the steering committee as a promising practice is noted by the monitoring team as a maintenance item since professional development is a requirement by the district.

Needs Improvement

Improving results through performance goals and indicators

The state has established performance goals and indicators in the areas of performance/participation on statewide assessments, graduation rates and dropout rates for students with disabilities. The steering committee indicated the district has policies and procedures for addressing the state performance goals and indicators. Through staff interviews, it was indicated there was a concern about the numbers of students dropping out previous to completion of a high school program. The monitoring team validated through the on-site interviews an area of needing improvement.

The steering committee noted that parent surveys showed a concern that teachers were not setting high goals for students with disabilities. The review team validated this as an area of concern due to the lack of IEPs with goals and objectives that correlate to the state content standards for education. In addition, the lack of transition planning in the areas of employment and independent living also contributes to this concern for setting high goals for students. This area is addressed further under principle five– Individual Education Program.

Personnel and professional development

The steering committee identified that teachers wanted more input in identifying staff development needs and training opportunities for students with special needs. The review team validated this as an area needing improvement through staff interviews conducted onsite. Regular education staff reported they felt it would be beneficial to have more “concrete” training. Teachers indicated a need overall to better comprehend the evaluation information of students with disabilities, in order to provide an appropriate educational program.

Out of Compliance

Issue requiring immediate attention

The review team completed a review of the child count for December 1, 2000. The team identified a student who was listed on the federal child count twice. The district has received a duplicate amount of federal funds for this student and will be required to return the funds for this error.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Numbers of children screened: preschool age, school-age
- ? Personnel development information
- ? Personnel training

Promising Practices

The school district always provides free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children at public expense.

Maintenance

The district has policies and procedures in place to support the offering of a free appropriate public education to all students.

Student and parent survey results indicate that students and parents feel the district shows concern about student learning, and that inclusion techniques are used rather than taking the student out of the room away from peers.

The district uses techniques to monitor the number of removals of students for disciplinary reasons. This is done through an intranet-based management system for schools.

Needs Improvement

The district has made changes in the manner that functional behavioral assessments are completed. Information needs to be gathered in a different way.

In-school suspension was found to be a change of placement for students with special needs. The district has taken steps to look into our policies and procedures when a student with disabilities is serving in-school suspension.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

The team determined the district's placement option of "The Winner Preschool" program is a promising practice. By contacting for services with this private program, the district has available special education options into the regular preschool, nursery and toddler classes in addition to individual services as needed. Related services are also made available at this site as appropriate for children.

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for Free Appropriate Public Education as concluded by the steering committee. The fact the district always provides free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children at public expense was not verified as a promising practice by the review team since it is a requirement of the district, instead this is viewed as an area of maintenance for the district.

Needs Improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as needs improvement for Free Appropriate Public Education conclude by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Teacher file reviews
- ? Surveys
- ? General curriculum information
- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Initial referral log

Maintenance

Valid comprehensive evaluations are conducted and completed by the district with a team of certified staff members, along with parental input. With the parental input and the valid information from the evaluations, the staff creates effective individualized education programs.

The district has policies and procedures in place for providing appropriate written notices and obtaining consent before assessments or reevaluations are completed.

The district has procedures in place to make sure reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements and to ensure each student is properly evaluated. Parent permission is always obtained before initial evaluations and reevaluations.

Needs Improvement

With information obtained from the surveys, the district needs to have appropriate curricula and materials for students with limited English proficiency who have special needs.

The committee identified that the school district needs to complete more behavioral assessments.

Validation Results

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for Appropriate Evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee identified a need to have appropriate curricula and materials for students with limited English proficiency who have special needs. The review team was unable to verify this as an area needing improvement. The review of student files did not support a concern in working with students speaking a different native language. In addition, staff stated in interview that there were no students in the district who currently speak a different language, and they did not see evidence of this problem.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04:02 Determination of needed evaluation data.

Administrative rule requires that the district obtain input from the parent in planning for evaluation of students. The monitoring team reviewed a total of thirty-four student files. The review team was able to find parental input into the planning process for students who were referred for evaluation by their parent. The remaining student files did not contain any documentation to support the district is seeking the

parent's input and participation in the evaluation planning process. This was also supported in interview by special education staff. Staff reported they did not seek parent input when planning evaluations.

The district is required to have the members of the evaluation team review existing evaluation data to determine what assessments will be administered to determine whether a student needs special education and related services. None of the thirty-four student files reflected that the district follows this procedure. In interview, staff was unaware of this requirement.

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures.

School districts must ensure that a variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and development information about the child to assist in determining whether the child is a child with a disability and the content of the IEP, including information related to enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum. The review team looked at thirty-four student files for evidence that functional assessment was occurring. None of the thirty-four files reflected the collection of functional assessment information for IEP program development. In interview, staff did not have an awareness of the purpose of functional assessment or how it relates to program planning.

Administrative rule requires that children be assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, as applicable, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities. The self-assessment completed by the district identified a need to complete more behavioral assessments. The review team validated this need. The team identified three students receiving counseling as a related service. The three students had no behavioral assessments or behavioral goals in place to the provision of counseling. One student receiving counseling did have a behavioral goal that stated "will follow Springfield Correctional behavior plan". There were no short-term objectives accompanying this goal, nor was the student assessed in the area of behavior. Another student had a history of behavioral concerns, documented in the IEP over a period of several years. No behavioral assessments were administered to the student, nor was a behavior intervention plan developed. The district, in response to her behavioral difficulties, changed the placement of the student, rather than seeking to assess her behavior and develop a behavior intervention plan. The placement consisted of having the student come to school on an intermittent basis and take assignments home to complete and then return.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Teacher file reviews
- ? Surveys
- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Parental rights document
- ? Consent and prior notice forms

- ? Public awareness information
- ? FERPA disclosure
- ? Personnel training

Promising Practices

For the 2002-2003 school year, our district will be creating a special education website to go along with the Winner School District's website. This website will contain our comprehensive plan, a copy of the parental rights brochure, 504 information, and all special education forms that are used district-wide.

Maintenance

The district has policies and procedures in place to ensure that parents have been fully informed of all information relevant for whatever consent is being sought.

The district allows parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records of their child.

The district has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions and requests for due process that ensures compliance.

Parental rights brochure is always given to parents. We ensure confidentiality and proper access to records.

Needs Improvement

With information obtained from the student files, the district needs to do a better job of informing 17-year-old students of the changes that will take place once they turn 18 years of age.

The district needs develop a better system of maintaining a log when educational records are disclosed to authorized/unauthorized persons.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

Since the special education web site has not been developed at this time the monitoring team was unable to identify this as a promising practice. However, this will be an excellent addition to the district's website and the review team looks forward to its development.

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for Procedural Safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee felt there was a need to have a better system of maintaining logs when educational records are disclosed to authorized/unauthorized persons. The monitoring team did not validate this as an area needing improvement. No concerns were noted in the district's process for maintaining logs regarding educational record disclosure.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:30:16:01 Transfer of parental rights

Administrative rule requires that one year prior to a student reaching the age of majority (18 years of age); the IEP must include a statement that the child has been informed of the transfer of parental rights to the adult student. This statement must be in place, unless the student has been appointed a guardian to make educational decisions for them.

The steering committee identified the transfer of parental rights as an area needing improvement. The monitoring team validated this as an area of noncompliance via the review of files of students who have turned eighteen. Three files of students, ages eighteen and older, were reviewed by the monitoring team. None of these students was notified a year prior to turning age eighteen of the transfer of parental rights.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Personnel training
- ? Survey information
- ? Teacher file reviews
- ? Personnel development information

Promising Practices

All special education teachers and speech therapists have laptop computers to use when preparing for IEP meetings. They also use these laptop computers during their IEP meetings to assist them in explaining the IEP. If changes need to be made or if parents have other concerns or other input, the special education teachers can immediately put that information in right there at the meeting.

Maintenance

During the IEP process, the team consists of people who are appropriate and help meet all identified responsibilities of the IEP.

Our district has policies and procedures in place to ensure appropriate IEPs are developed and are effective for each eligible student. Every IEP is unique to that individual. Oral and written notice is given to parents to ensure that the individual education plan is parent influenced and driven.

Our general educators are in agreement with our IEPs and they work with our special education staff very closely when they think something would work better for a student.

Needs Improvement

With information received from our teacher file reviews, the committee concluded that the special education office needs to do a better job of dating evaluations when they are received.

The committee also noted that pertinent information is not always on the front cover of our IEPs. (social security numbers, parental address and phone numbers, in a couple cases child's birth date was wrong)

Out of Compliance

Twenty percent of our IEP covers had areas where parents had not initialed one or two of the required areas.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

The monitoring team agrees that special educator's use of the individual lap top computers is a promising practice, as identified by the steering committee.

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for individual education program as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee identified a need for dating or time-stamping evaluations upon receiving them. The monitoring team was unable to verify this an area needing improvement. No concerns were noted in the timeliness of receiving evaluations and meeting to discuss the evaluation results.

The steering committee identified that pertinent information was not always listed on student IEPs. The monitoring team was unable to verify this as an area needing improvement. IEPs reviewed by the team were completed consistently.

In the case of a student whose behavior impedes his/her learning or that of others, the IEP team must consider if appropriate strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, strategies and supports are needed to address the behaviors. During student file reviews by the monitoring team five students were found to have behavior concerns. Although student files had plans to address the behaviors the plans lacked strategies and did not include positive interventions (i.e. "chews fingers, distracted, has aide to keep him on task", and "do the modifications listed on page 5 to help him keep on task and complete assignments".) The monitoring team encourages the district to review information in policy pertaining to consideration of special factors.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP)

ARSD 24:05:27:13 Modifications to regular vocational program

ARSD 24:05:27:13.02 Transition services

Administrative rules state that transition planning must begin at age 14, with transition services beginning at age 16 or earlier if appropriate. Students need to be fully involved in the planning process, taking into account student preferences and interests. The monitoring team completed a review of thirteen student files for students who were transition age 14 and up. The transition plans reviewed by the team did not provide for an outcome orientated plan designed to assist students in moving out of school into appropriate post-secondary options. Secondary level special educators were also interviewed. In the course of the interview, the staff indicated they were unaware of the requirement to focus transition planning on student outcomes. The plans seen by the team addressed current student employment and living situations, rather than seeking to address the desired student outcomes upon exiting high school. An example of an outcome for employment was “is looking for employment”. An example of an outcome for independent living was “is living with aunt and uncle”.

The IEP team is required to address a course of study for students age fourteen and up. Student IEPs did contain a course of study for students, but it only reflected the current year and previous year’s coursework for each student. It was not being utilized as a planning device to help ensure the students achieved their desired outcomes for employment and independent living. In interview with district staff, they stated they were unaware of the purpose of the course of study as it related to the student’s outcomes.

The transition plans for students did not contain any identified transition goals, nor were there any service recommendations in any of the thirteen plans reviewed. Service recommendations should reflect the activities the student will complete, who is responsible for the activity, and initiation and completion dates for the activity. The IEP team wrote justification statements for each of the five areas of transition (employment, independent living, community participation, and adult services and post secondary education) that consistently referenced the students past activities or coursework currently being taken. The justification statements were not based upon assessment of the student’s abilities in each of the areas in the transition plan.

A review of data prepared for the continuous monitoring process showed the district was cited for noncompliance in the area of transition planning in a 1998 monitoring report. This area continues to be a compliance problem for the district and it appears that corrective action completed in 1998 did not systemically change how the district addresses transition planning for students.

A student’s IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student’s identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In the majority of the thirty-four files reviewed, present levels of performance were not linked to evaluation and did not contain the student’s academic strengths, needs or their involvement in the general curriculum. The student’s annual goals were written from standardized test information, which did not provide skill-based information. The goals, therefore, did not represent what the student could accomplish within a 12-month period and were not written in measurable or observable terms. For example, “...will improve pre-academic readiness skills to allow independent completion of classroom activities”, and “will increase his social and emotional health resulting in overall behavior improvements”.

The monitoring team was unable to validate that twenty percent of the districts IEP covers had areas where parents had not initialed one or two of the required areas.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Personnel training
- ? File reviews
- ? Parent, student, general educator surveys
- ? General curriculum information

Maintenance

The Winner School District has policies and procedures in place to ensure that each student receives services in the least restrictive environment in order to provide the best education possible.

Needs Improvement

The school district staff is developing a reevaluation team review sheet to allow the regular education teachers an opportunity to be more involved in the evaluation/reevaluation process. This support, the committee feels, is needed for students to have a better success rate in the general classroom.

Validation Results

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with the maintenance area for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee indicated a need for regular educators to be more involved in identifying the needs of students through the evaluation and re-evaluation process. The monitoring team validated that the district has designed a teacher input form to assist in identifying the appropriate assessments to assure students a better success rate in the general classroom. The monitoring team encourages the district to continue to address this area to assure children are education in the least restrictive environment.